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# The disastrous battle at Hela of 1511: a reappraisal

With the Habsburg Low Countries being dragged into the Danish-Hanseatic war of 1510–1511, a Dutch commercial fleet with mainly vessels from Holland was destroyed at Hela in a Lubeckian attack close to the coast of Danzig. Hanseatic, Dutch and Danish contemporary historiography offers diverging views on the events and outcomes linked to that battle and the military encounters preceding and succeeding it. By opposing Danish, Dutch and Hanseatic sources this paper offers a re-appraisal of the events at Hela. It connects the battle to the naval confrontations at Bornholm and Rixhöft (now Cape Rozewie, Poland) of the Lubeckian and Danish fleets and analyses the various views on the course of events and on the naval power balance of the time. It makes a reconstruction of the events inevitable. The paper simultaneously touches upon the various angles under which Dutch, Danish and Hanseatic historiography approached the conflicts. It will show that the interconnectivity of the battles has been underestimated.

## INTRODUCTION

On August 11, 1511 a fleet commanded by Lubeck citizens took a merchant convoy of about 250 Dutch vessels by surprise, sinking and burning many ships after their forced stranding on the coast of the peninsula of Hela close to Danzig and taking several dozen as a prize to be sold at the Lubeck market. Whilst Lubeck's citizenry celebrated victory over their economic competitors in the Baltic, Dutch shipping and seaborne trade faced unprecedented losses.<sup>1</sup> Depicted as the catastrophe of the century, Dutch historiographers tend to focus on events at Hela as if the attack could be isolated from Danish-Hanseatic naval confrontations at Bornholm and Rixhöft which preceded and succeeded the attack on the Dutch convoy. The Dutch tend to see themselves as victims, of unprecedented Hanseatic aggression, but simultaneously blamed the Danes for refusing crucial naval support.<sup>2</sup> Danish historiographers put focus on the

1 K. Fritze, G. Krause, *Seekriege der Hanse* (Berlin 1989) 177–178.

2 L. Sicking, *Zeemacht en onmacht: maritieme politiek in de Nederlanden, 1488–1558*

battles of Bornholm and Rixhöft, implying that events at Hela were of minor concern and insisted on Danish naval dominance over Lubeck.<sup>3</sup> Hanseatic historiography approaches the battles from the angle of Lubeck's naval power play against both Denmark and its commercial rivals from the Low Countries in an attempt to maintain its position as the most important hub of Hanseatic trade in the region.<sup>4</sup> Such approaches reflect the coloured and 'nationalistic' or local patriotic lenses through which contemporaries observed the events. Their views left long lasting traces in later historiography and make it until today rather difficult to unravel the events. By comparing Danish, Dutch and Hanseatic chronicles and sources, this paper offers a re-appraisal of the battles and throws new light on aspects relating to the order of events, the involvement of the various parties and the balance of forces at sea.

### POLITICAL CONFLICT IN THE BALTIC

The battle of Hela was the outcome of a series of conflicts between Lubeck with its allied Wend cities, the Habsburg Low Countries and the kingdom of Denmark. They all rooted in Lubeck's deteriorating position in the Baltic in both economic and political terms. At the end of the 15th century Lubeck had lost its leading position to Danzig that saw its trading volume and its population numbers rise whilst those of Lubeck steadily decreased. Danzig's growth was largely based on Holland's dependency on grain and wood imports from the Polish and Baltic regions. The town's excellent connection of its harbor to the Polish hinterland attracted increasing numbers of notably Dutch ships from Holland and Frisia. From the mid-15th century onwards, a shift in transport volumes through the Sound to the eastern Baltic became visible and affected Lubeck's position as the leading staple market in the region. It provoked protective commercial policies and even military interventions by Lubeck's commercial elites and council targeting the county of Holland. The intensity of conflicts increased around 1500 after Denmark decided to support Dutch trading interests in an effort to counterbalance Hanseatic and first and foremost Lubeck's influence in Scandinavia.<sup>5</sup>

The dissolution in 1501 of the Kalmar Union that since 1397 united Norway, Sweden and Denmark under one single crown worked as a catalyst for further unrest. Whilst revolts in Norway were suppressed, the quest for

(Amsterdam 1998) 110–112.

3 For example: E. Kjersgaard, 'De første Oldenborgere 1448–1533' in: J. Danstrup, H. Koch (eds.), *Danmarks Historie*, Bd. 5 (Copenhagen 1963) 173–179.

4 See: W-D. Hauschild, 'Der Seekrieg 1510/11 und der Friede von Malmö 1512' in: A. Grassmann (ed.), *Lübeckische Geschichte* (Lübeck 19973) 369.

5 See: H. Brand, 'Baltic connections. Changing patterns in seaborne trade 1450–1800' in: L. Bes, H. Brand and E. Frankot (eds.), *Baltic Connections Archival Guide to the Maritime Relations of the Countries around the Baltic Sea (including the Netherlands) 1450–1800*. Vol 1. (Leiden, Boston 2007) [The northern Worlds 36/1] 1–6 and relevant literature mentioned there.

Swedish independence proved to be more successful. Despite support of the Habsburg emperor Maximilian, King Hans proved incapable of crushing a Swedish uprising led by the Swedish regent Sven Sture. Danish power play in Sweden seriously affected Hanseatic trade in the region. At various occasions King Hans prohibited Hanseatic shipping to Sweden and ordered the capture of Hanseatic ships and cargoes in order to weaken the revolting Swedes. In 1505 the King reinforced his anti-Hanseatic policies by issuing prohibitions on all Danish trade with Lubeck and the Wend cities at the Northern German coast. King Hans thereupon privileged French, Scottish and most and for all Dutch trade in his territories in an attempt to contain Hanseatic influence in the region.<sup>6</sup> The King's measures further undermined the precarious power balance in the Baltic.

In an effort to anticipate sustained peace relations with King Hans once his dominion was secured, Lubeck agreed in 1506 to accept a temporal interruption of its trade with Sweden. It broke the agreement in 1509 after Sven Sture had succumbed under Danish pressure and had signed the Copenhagen Treaty which curtailed Hanseatic privileges.<sup>7</sup> King Hans reacted by issuing a ban on Hanseatic trade which provoked a declaration of war by Lubeck. The Trave town successfully invoked the support of the Habsburg emperor Maximilian, allowing Lubeck to organize a blockade of the Sound entrance.<sup>8</sup> Efforts to rally Hamburg and the Wend cities Lüneburg, Wismar and Rostock behind its cause however failed. With Danzig insisting on its neutrality, the Lubeck town council saw no other option but to gather all financial means needed to man a war fleet by itself.<sup>9</sup> King Hans for his part confiscated Hanseatic commodities in Denmark and ordered the construction of a naval fleet.<sup>10</sup>

With the Lubeckian war fleet patrolling the Sound entrance, shipping from Holland was brought to an almost complete standstill in 1509 and 1510. The emperor's decision to allow such action, met serious resistance in Holland's main cities who saw their Baltic trade being interrupted because of hasty imperial decision making.<sup>11</sup> After the city councils convinced the emperor that Lubeck's Sound policies were just another attempt to contain competing Hollandish shipping in the Baltic, Maximilian changed his mind. Holland's shipping through the Sound was to be restarted, provided that the Hollanders refrained from military support to Denmark. Lubeck refused to acknowledge

6 In May 1506 King Hans also invited Northern-German princes to a meeting in Kiel in order to increase pressure on Lubeck and its Hanseatic allies. Hauschild, 'Der Seekrieg', 366-367.

7 Hauschild, 'Der Seekrieg', 369. H. Stob, *Die Hanse*, (Graz, Vienna, Cologne s.d.) 280.

8 H. Brand, 'Habsburg diplomacy during the Holland-Wend War of 1510-14' in: H. Brand (ed.), *Trade, diplomacy and cultural exchange, Continuity and change in the North Sea Area*

*and the Baltic c. 1350-1750* (2005) 117-119.

9 Hauschild, 'Der Seekrieg', 367.

10 C.F. Allen, *De tre nordiske Rigers Historie under Hans Christiern den Anden, Frederik den Første, Gustav Vasa, Grevefeiden. 1497-1536*, Bd. 1 (Copenhagen 1864) 518; E. Arup, *Danmarks Historie*, Bd. 2A 1282-1523 (Copenhagen 1961) 317; Kjersgaard, 'Oldenborgere', 173.

11 Coördinated protests came from Amsterdam, Enkhuizen, Hoorn and Medemblik that had suffered most.

the new imperial directives and subsequently intensified military action. During the spring of 1510, its fleet ravaged the coastal area of the Sound and captured eleven Dutch merchant vessels trespassing the waters near Helsingör.<sup>12</sup> With the Danish king favouring Dutch trading conditions within his realm and Lubeck damaging Holland's merchant fleet, the Low Countries were dragged into a conflict that initially only concerned the Danes and the Hanseatic cities in Northern Germany.

#### VIEWS AND PERSPECTIVES IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Research on the Battle of Hela primarily draws upon documents that relate to the Hanse Diet of June 1511, where war with Denmark was declared and plans for naval action designed. Published in the *Hanserecesse*, they hold a report written by the Lubeckian fleet commanders the day after the battle of Rixhöft as well as a letter from a well-informed merchant about the whereabouts of the Dutch merchant fleet and Lubeck's naval preparations. Much of the aftermath can be reconstructed through an analysis of complementary correspondence between Danzig, Stralsund, the Habsburg government, Denmark and Lubeck.<sup>13</sup> To it comes a Lower Saxon song apparently written by an eyewitness which in 74 stanzas describes events during the battles at Bornholm, Hela and Rixhöft.<sup>14</sup> Mantels complemented the poem's edition with extracts from Reimar Kock's (ca. 1500–1569) chronicle published in 1549.<sup>15</sup> The overlap between the poem and chronicle is striking.

Kock himself disposed of contemporary material among which the widely read Lubeckian *Ratskronik* and the rather sober Chronicle written by Lübeck's "superintendent" Hermann Bonnus (1504–1548) and published in 1539.<sup>16</sup> Bonnus was an opponent of the anti-Danish and anti-Dutch regime headed by Jürgen Wullenwever and of the wars Lubeck fought with its competitors. His rather dry account of the events at Hela does however not breath these sentiments. Kock's chronicle gained however much more authority be it that he represents the viewpoint of the Lubeck council and seems because of his repeated anti-Danish and anti-Dutch sentiments, rather biased. He tends to highlight Lubeck's military accomplishments, probably also because he was

12 Allen, *Rigers Historie*, 521; Kjersgaard, 'Oldenborgere', 177; Hauschild, 'Der Seekrieg', 369; Sicking, *Zeemacht en onmacht*, 109–110. Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, 172–174.

13 D. Schäfer (ed.), *Hanserecesse von 1477–1530. Sechster band (1510–1516)* [HR III, 6] (Leipzig 1899) 118–282.

14 W. Mantels, 'Niedersächsische Lieder' *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 1 (Lubeck 1860) 93–116.

15 Reimar Kock, *Chroniken, Dasz dritte theill der Chroniken, dero kayserlichen freyen, undt desz heyligen Römischen Reichstat Lubeck* (Lubeck 1549) (MsLub244 Stadtbibliothek Lübeck, urn:nbn:de:gbv:48-1-60531, copy 17th century.)

16 Herman Bonnus, *Chronik von Lübeck* (Lubeck 1539) (MsLub221 Stadtbibliothek Lübeck, urn:nbn:de:gbv:48-1-715047, copy ca. 1800) fo. 18vo.-20.



The Lübeck chronicler Reimar Kock. Anonymous drawing in a manuscript of the *Cronica Der Käyserliken Stadt Lübeck* (1616). WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

familiar with naval warfare as he served as a priest aboard of a warship in the years 1532–1536.<sup>17</sup> In that respect Beyer's *Danzig Chronicle* can be regarded as more reliable. As a member of the Danzig Council, Christoph Beyer (1458–1518) was a well-informed eyewitness of the events at Hela and Rixhöft.<sup>18</sup> His concise but precise account offers valuable added information about the course of events.<sup>19</sup>

Both Lubeckian chronicles coloured the views of nineteenth-century German historians like Hoffmann, Waitz and Becker who put much emphasis on the Lubeckian point of view stressing the minor role of the Danes during the confrontations. Although Becker also consulted Huitfeldt's Danish Chronicle, he mixed up events at Hela en Rixhöft and thus reached unreliable conclu-

17 S. Möbius, *Das Gedächtnis der Reichsstadt. Unruhen und Kriege in der lübeckischen Chronistik und Erinnerungskultur des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen 2011) 79–81, 85–88.

18 W. Stammler, 'Beyer, Christoph', *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 2 (1955) 204–205. [www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd104074647.html#ndbcontent]; Christoffer Beyer, 'Danziger Chronik' in: Th. Hirsch, M. Töppen and E. Stre-

hlke (eds.), *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum, Die Geschichtsquellen der Preussischen Vorzeit bis zum Untergang der Ordensherrschaft*. Fünfter Band (Leipzig 1874) 460.

19 P. Oliński, 'Die Hanse in den Danziger Chroniken', in: V. Henn, J. Sarnowsky (eds.), *Das Bild der Hanse in der städtischen Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Trier 2010) [Hansische Studien, 20] 54–55.

sions where the Danish defeat is concerned.<sup>20</sup> These and other works published in the decades around 1900 emphasize Lübeck's dominance at sea and contrast it to the weakness of the Danish and Dutch responses against justified military action.<sup>21</sup>

More recent German Hanseatic historiography shows reluctance in that respect but underestimates the extent to which the three battles were intertwined. Dollinger for example only refers to a battle near Danzig and focuses on the consequences of the seized copper cargo owned by the Fugger firm.<sup>22</sup> Hauschild and Fouquet emphasize the inconclusiveness of the Bornholm battle and minimize Danish involvement as they do not mention events at Rixhöft. An exception is the concise account of Fritze and Krause, although they overlook like many others Dutch participation in the Rixhöft battle.<sup>23</sup> All, however, consider Lübeck's military efforts on the long term as rather ineffective because countermeasures against Hanseatic trade in the Low Countries were fierce and Lübeck decided to sign the treaty of Malmö in 1512 whereby the city agreed to limit Hanseatic influence in Scandinavia. Moreover, relations with Danzig (which already before the war insisted on its neutrality) further deteriorated as the latter aimed to foster its excellent trading relations with the Low Countries.<sup>24</sup>

Although Danish historiography tends to stress Danish supremacy at sea even after the failure at Rixhöft, contemporary source material that relates to these specific events is rather scarce. Of the three Danish chronicles which appeared within approximately a decade after Kock's account, only Henrik Smith (c.1495-1563) briefly mentions the attack at Hela. His and other chronicles of his time leave the impression that confrontations with Lübeck and its adherents were business as usual with both parties capturing enemy ships on a regular basis. They tend to highlight Danish victories and emphasize the striking force of newly built flagships *Engelen* and *Maria*.<sup>25</sup> In his

20 M. Hoffmann, 'Lübeck's Krieg gegen Dänemark 1509-1512', *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 12. Heft (1905) 82; G. Waitz, 'Streitigkeiten und Verhandlungen Lübeck's mit König Johann (Hans) von Dänemark', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, Band 1 (Lübeck 1860) 16; J. R. Becker, *Umständliche Geschichte der Kaiserl. und des Heil. Römischen Reichs freyen Stadt Lübeck*, Erster Band, (Lübeck 1782) 493.

21 See for example: Th. Lindner, *Die deutsche Hanse. Ihre Geschichte und Bedeutung* (1899, reprint 2015) 160; L. Lahaine, *Die Hanse und Holland von 1474 bis 1525, Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 23 (1918) 246-247 although he focusses on the battle at Hela.

22 Ph. Dollinger, *Die Hanse* (Stuttgart 2012<sup>6</sup>)

418. See below p. 18.

23 Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, 177.

24 Hauschild, 'Der Seekrieg', 369; G. Fouquet, 'Vom Krieg hören und schreiben' in: Th. Stamm-Kuhlmann, J. Elvert, B. Aschmann & J. Hohensee (eds.), *Geschichtsbilder. Festschrift für Michael Salewski zum 65. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden 2003) [HMRG Beihefte, 47] 179.

25 'Roskilde-Aarbogen fra 1448-1549 (De oldenborgske Kongers Krønike)' in: H. Rørdam (ed.), *Monumenta Historiæ Danicæ* (Copenhagen 1873) 197-384; 'En dansk Krønike fra Valdemar Atterdag til Kong Christian den Tredies Død' in: Rørdam, *Monumenta*, 499-556; 'Henrik Smith. En dansk Aarbog fra Svend Tveskjæg til Frederik II', published ca. 1560, in: Rørdam, *Monumenta*, 571-662, particularly 610.



Map of the Danzig Bay, with the city of Danzig (Gdansk) on the right and the Hela peninsula bottom right. Not visible is Rixhöft, situated at the extreme west end of the peninsula. Map from *Den nieuwen spiegel der zeevaert* by Lucas Janszoon Waghenaer (1597). AMSTERDAM, HET SCHEEPVAART-MUSEUM

*Danmarks Riges Krønike* published some fifty years later, the King's chancellor Arildt Huitfeldt presented a somewhat balanced picture. He was the first to acknowledge that the Danes were forced to retreat during the battle at Rixhöft. His views found their way into Danish historiography of the second half of the nineteenth century, although Allen misplaced the events by situating them at the coast of Mecklenborg.<sup>26</sup> Paludan-Miller downgraded Lubeck's victory by calling it the result of an accident.<sup>27</sup> Such interpretations also pop up in more recent Danish research insisting on Danish naval dominance in the Baltic.<sup>28</sup>

In Dutch historiography, Lubeck is presented as the villain attacking a harmless merchant convoy. More prominent however are accusations of betrayal by the Danes. Cornelius Aurelius argued in his *Divisiekronek* (published in 1517) that Danish unwillingness was responsible for the disastrous turn of events, a view later expanded by authors such as Van Gouthoeven and notably Velius in his seventeenth-century Hoorn Chronicle.<sup>29</sup> Their singular focus on Hela without mentioning encounters at Bornholm and Rixhöft has

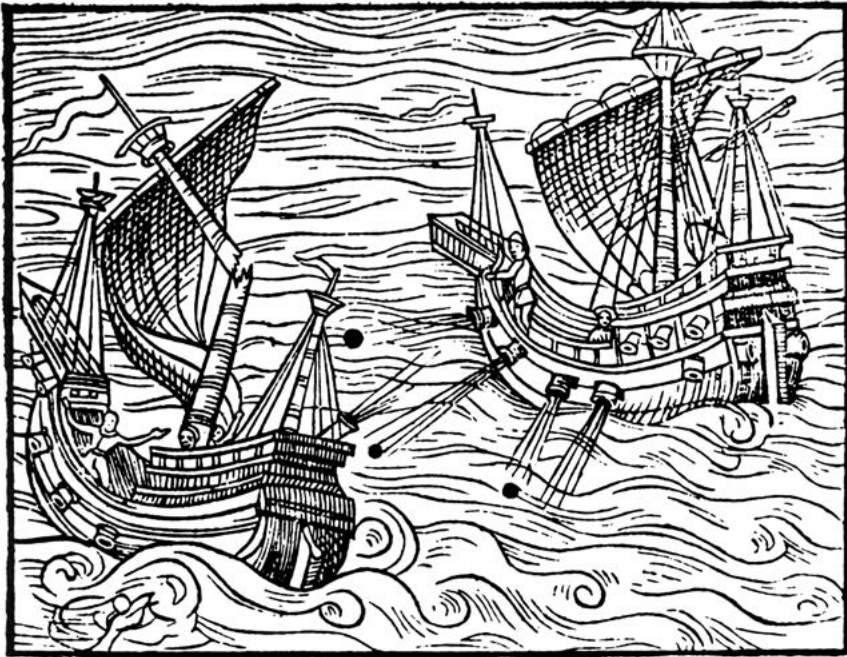
26 Allen, *Rigers Historie*, 576.

27 C. Paludan-Müller, *De første Konger af den Oldenborgske Slægt* (Copenhagen 1874) 272.

28 See for example: Arup, *Danmarks Historie*, 319; Kjersgaard, 'Oldenborgere', 173-179.

29 A. de Hamer (ed.), *Die cronycke van Hollandt, Zeelandt ende Vrieslant, met die cronike der biscoppen van Uutrecht* (*Divisiekronek*) (2011) fo. 430. [www.dbnl.org/tekst/aure001cron02\\_01/aure001cron02\\_01\\_0949.php](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/aure001cron02_01/aure001cron02_01_0949.php).

W. Van Gouthoeven, *D'oude cronycke en historien van Hollant (met West-Vriesland) van Zeeland ende van Utrecht* (Dordrecht 1620) fo. 572; D. Velius, *Chroniick van Hoorn* (Hoorn 1604, 1617<sup>2</sup>, 1648<sup>3</sup>) resp. fo. 91, 89, 99.



Battle between two hulks. Anonymous woodcut, c. 1550.

left its marks on Dutch historiography. Danish involvement in the naval battles is barely mentioned as authors solely focus on the devastating extent of the disaster at Hela.<sup>30</sup>

#### NAVAL ACTIVITY IN THE BALTIC IN THE FIRST HALF YEAR OF 1511

Lubeck attacking Dutch vessels in the Sound obliged emperor Maximilian to allow reprisals against Hanseatic merchants residing in the Low Countries. Preparations for naval actions started in the winter of 1511, as the States of Holland agreed to collect funds to build a small fleet of eight warships, in order to protect Dutch sailing through the Sound and to deliver support to the Danish king. Although the Dutch now openly supported Danish interests and damages were considerable, financial support was limited to such an extent

30 See: J. ter Gouw, *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam*, III (Amsterdam 1881) 348; Sicking, *Zeemacht en onmacht*, 110; L. Sicking, 'Die Offensive Lösung. Militärische Aspekte des holländischen Ostseehandels im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert', *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 117 (1999) 46, mentioning that the Danes secured the voyage to the Baltic through the Sound;

Brand, 'Habsburg diplomacy', 123 gives the date August 11, while in his paper, 'Den diplomatiske løsning af konflikterne i Sundet mellem de habsburgske Nederlande, Danmark og den tyske Hansa, 1510-1532' in: O. Degn (ed.), *Tolden i Sundet* (Copenhagen 2010) 181 the wrong date August 26 is mentioned.

that only four warships were equipped. In May 1511 the Dutch squire Aernt van Duivenvoorde was appointed as a commander of this convoy fleet departing to the Sound in June 1511.<sup>31</sup>

Lubeck also used the winter break to reinforce its striking power at sea and financed the equipment of a fleet commanded by the local merchant and privateer Cord König. He set out for an expedition after Shroved Tuesday 1511 and allegedly captured forty Danish vessels of which several were burnt and others seized.<sup>32</sup> The Danes responded in the early days of June. With the Dutch being brought safely through the open seas, Denmark's admiral Jens Holgersen Ulfstand then coordinated an attack on Travemünde followed by Danish incursions in the waters and lands around Wismar, Rostock and Stralsund where several ships were captured and some villages ravaged.<sup>33</sup> The Danish fleet sailed on to Warnemünde and Rügen with heavy looting along the coast and to Copenhagen after a fruitless attack on Øland.<sup>34</sup>

Since the attacks on Wendic soil were launched during a Diet of the Hanseatic towns in Lubeck, the assembly voted for immediate reprisals. An operational order of six paragraphs dressed on 21 July held explicit directives to damage the Danish Kingdom and its allies.<sup>35</sup> Seizure of all ships visiting and supporting Denmark or trespassing the Sound was a major aim, with the exception of vessels sailing with certificates from England, Danzig and Hamburg. Moreover, friendly shipping through the Belt with certificate was allowed. Vessels heading for other countries were only to be stopped by the fleet in order to buy provisions and ship materials. And last but not least, all prizes had to be brought to Lubeck. Although nothing was said about the Dutch in particular, a letter from the merchant Henne Kysser left no doubt that the expedition was designed to harm both Danish and Dutch shipping.<sup>36</sup> The order indicates that the Wends concern was not only about military revenge, but that they also meant to restore the commercial balance in the Baltic at the advantage of Lubeck and the Wends.

#### THE BATTLE AT BORNHOLM ON SATURDAY AUGUST 9, 1511

The Lubeck fleet commanded by the council members Fritz Grawert and Herman Falke set sail on St. Anna Day (July 26th) and headed to Falsterbo on the

31 Sicking, *Zeemacht en onmacht*, 110.

32 Becker, *Umständliche Geschichte*, 492; Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, 151; Allen, *Rigers Historie*, 519; *Monumenta Historiæ Danicæ*, 611. For captures of ships from Frisia, Holland, Zealand and Denmark by König, see: HR III, 6, no. 188 § 49, p. 130; § 150, p. 148; no. 196 § 92, p. 203; § 98, p. 206; p. 300; no. 284, p. 307 (1512) and p. 405 note 2.

33 Compare: Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, 176

with a slight different version of the events.

34 HR III, 6 no. 208, 253; Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 131vo-134; Waitz, 'Streitigkeiten', 168; Hoffmann, 'Lübeck's Krieg', 81; Arildt Huitfeldt, *Danmarks Riges Krønike, Kong Hans' Historie* (1599, faksimileprint 1917) 280-281; Becker, *Umständliche Geschichte*, 493.

35 HR III, 6 no. 203, 251.

36 HR III, 6 no. 208, 252.

Southwest coast of Scania.<sup>37</sup> Although Lubeck and the Wend towns agreed to common action, the latter reluctantly delivered material support. With 18 of the total of 21 ships being equipped by the Trave town, the Wend share in the war effort proved to be rather limited.<sup>38</sup> Only three ships from Rostock joined the fleet at Warnemünde, whilst three Stralsunder vessels did not manage to reach them in time.<sup>39</sup> Apparently eight yachts, probably all manned by the Lubeck privateer Cord König, also joined the squadron but left before hostilities with the Danes even started.<sup>40</sup> König's solitary demeanor was considered an act of munity with the commanders requesting to get König and his crew arrested.<sup>41</sup>

According to the report written by the Lubeckian commanders on August 15th, stormy weather forced them to seek refuge under Bornholm's coast.<sup>42</sup> In the meantime three ships manned by Warnemünde had received orders to gather information on the movements of the Danish fleet. Because its commanders wrongly concluded that the King's fleet had withdrawn to Copenhagen the confrontation with the Danish warships at Bornholm proved to be a rather unexpected event.<sup>43</sup> On 9 August the Hansards sighted a Danish fleet of twenty vessels, headed by the King's new flagship *Engelen* that according to contemporaries was so impressive in size that it looked like 'a church among chapels', or 'a hen among her chickens', not in the least because it supposedly could carry a military force of 500 men.<sup>44</sup> The Lubeckian fleet, eager to exploit the situation, managed to navigate itself into a favourable position with both the sun and the wind at its tail. According to their own statement they merrily gained victory with only few casualties to deplore, suggesting that no ship was lost and that only unfavorable winds rescued the Danes from total defeat, despite of the Hansards being heavily outnumbered.<sup>45</sup>

Although Kock indeed argued that the Hansards were outnumbered with more than 3.000 men, the size of the fleets seems to contradict such estima-

37 HR III, 6 no. 198, 250; no. 214, 255-256.

38 Hoffmann, 'Lübeck's Krieg', 82; Rostock initially refused to deliver the agreed contingent but gave way after complaints by Lubeck. HR III, 6 no. 199, 250.

39 Lubeck had expected twice as much ships to be manned by Rostock. HR 3, VI, nr. 204, 252.

40 HR III, 6 no. 208, 252 where Kysser mentions eighteen ships and eight yachts from Lubeck and another six vessels and one yacht from Stralsund. Figures differ however. Mantels, 'Niedersächsische Lieder', verse 16, refers to eighteen ships, but no yachts; Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 134vo. likewise; Bonnus, *Chronik*, fo. 18vo. mentions sixteen ships.

41 HR III, 6 no. 214, 257.

42 HR III, 6 no. 214, 255-256.

43 Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 135 claims that 'disse bösewichte' had not been in the Sound, implying that the message that the king's ships were not expected at sea this summer, was unfounded.

44 Kjersgaard, 'Oldenborgere', 178; J. H. Barfod, *Flådens Fødsel* (Copenhagen 1990) 115, 132, 143.

45 Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, 152. Their statement that 'die Hanseflotte (soll) kein Schiff verloren haben' is contradicted by Allen, *Rigers Historie*, 573: 'Lybekkerne tale Intet om de fem forskudte og ødelagte Skibe...', and Huitfeldt, *Danmarks Riges Krønike*, 281: 'De Danske finge den Lybske Under-Admiral och to Skibe, De Lybske finge igen to de Danskis Orlogs Skibe'.

tions.<sup>46</sup> With Falk and Grawert commanding 21 ships and Ulfstand twenty, it would imply that Danish ships were much larger. Figures mentioned in the Lubeckian report that the single Danish ship captured had only 60 men aboard, suggests that Kock's estimates were too high.<sup>47</sup> The statement that no ship was lost, is contradicted by Danish and Swedish sources suggesting that five Hanseatic ships were neutralized during the fight. A letter written by sheriff Johan Monsson to the Swedish lord protector Svante Nilsson barely a month after the events, might confirm this. The letter mentions a Stralsunder nobleman and five Hanseatic ships having left the harbour of Kalmar a few days earlier. It concurs with Beyer's argument that the Hansards entered the Battle of Hela with only sixteen ships of the original twenty-one, suggesting that five ships were lost during the Bornholm battle. Huitfeldt claimed that both sides lost ships, amongst which a vessel of Lubeck's vice-commander.<sup>48</sup> With an eye on such observations and also because bad weather conditions prevented the battle from being resumed the next day, one can safely conclude that the confrontation ended in a draw.<sup>49</sup> Still, both Hansards and Danes considered the outcome a splendid victory with Lubeck even establishing an annual commemorating mass in the Church of St. Mary.<sup>50</sup>

#### COINCIDENCE, FACT PICKING AND DIPLOMACY

In their report, the Lubeckian fleet commanders Grawert and Falke emphasized that their men coincidentally discovered a large Dutch convoy on Monday August 11th at the roadsted of Hela, close to Danzig. After a sudden west-north-western storm blew them towards the peninsula, they caught sight of over 250 vessels mainly from Holland and Frisia, but also from England, Denmark and the Hanseatic cities Hamburg and Kampen. The merchant

46 Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 136 and 139 mentions 7.000 Danes against less than 4.000 Hansards. Mantels, 'Niedersächsische Lieder', verses 37–38 notes a three to one preponderance. This view is reflected in Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, 176: 'Die Hanse mussten gegen eine zählenmässig überlegene dänische Flotte kämpfen'.

47 HR III, 6 no. 214., 255–256; likewise: Bonnus, *Chronik*, fo. 18vo.

48 Allen, *Rigers Historie*, 573, '...fem af de lybske bleve saa ilde tilredte, at de vare ukampdygtige'; Huitfeldt, *Danmarks Riges Krønike*, 281; C.G. Styffe (ed.), *Bidrag till Skandinaviens Historia ur Utländska Arkiver*, 5 vols. (1504–1520) (Stockholm 1884) 377; Beyer, 'Danziger Chronik', 460; Fritze and Krause,

*Seekriege*, 152, and Brand, 'Habsburg diplomacy', 123, assume wrongly that the Danes lost their flagship in the battle.

49 See: Fouquet, 'Vom Krieg', 168; E. Hornborg, *Kampen om Östersjön* (Stockholm 1945) 84; Hauschild, 'Der Seekrieg', 369.

50 Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 136vo.: 'ein herlicke victoriam'; Mantels, 'Niedersächsische Lieder', verses 20, 40, and 72 where the author supplicated St. Anna to bring victory and thanked her afterwards; also Bonnus, *Chronik*, fo. 18vo.-19; Becker, *Umständliche Geschichte*, 493; Waitz, 'Streitigkeiten', 168; Lindner, *Die deutsche Hanse*, 160: 'einen glänzenden Seesieg'; Huitfeldt, *Danmarks Riges Krønike*, 282; Allen, *Rigers Historie*, 573.

fleet was at that instance protected by just four Dutch warships and a large *baardse*, which according to the report initially sailed out to attack the Hanseatic fleet, but subsequently fled with only a few merchant vessels following them. Panic struck as the Lubeckian fleet advanced, Dutch skippers ran their vessels aground on the coast of Hela and set them on fire. Other ships were simply abandoned and left as prizes for the Lübeck fleet. Lübeck thereupon took and manned as many enemy ships as possible in order to withstand a possible attack of combined Danes and Dutch forces. The Lubeckian commanders claimed in their report to have captured over thirty ships, 'dar ek schöne schepen manck syn' and professed hope that they could bring the prizes to the Trave port.<sup>51</sup>

Comparing various sources suggests that the commanders intentionally tried to downgrade Lubeck's role as an aggressor. Instead of attacking, the Dutch vessels fled as they realized that it was not Danish aid but Lubeck adversaries that were approaching.<sup>52</sup> The report holds no indications that Danish and Hamburg ships with cargoes of Danzig owners were taken. Nor does it mention that their men set Dutch ships on fire, or that Dutch skippers and crew from Holland and Denmark were taken as prisoners after having sought refuge in the houses of Danzig citizens in Hela.<sup>53</sup>

The idea that the attack at Hela was the consequence of sheer coincidence is however contradicted by the Lubeckian chronicles. Bonnus argued that the fleet was well aware of the whereabouts of the Dutch vessels, whilst Kock stated that messages were received after the battle at Bornholm confirming that a Dutch convoy had anchored at the Weisel estuary.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the letter sent by Henne Kysser suggests that merchant circles in Lubeck knew that 130 Dutch vessels had anchored at Danzig's roadsted, with more ships to arrive from Riga and Reval (Tallinn) only days before the Lübeck fleet left the Trave harbour.<sup>55</sup> Less than two weeks after the battle, the Lubeck council turned to the Hansakontor in Bruges, stating that it had ordered its fleet to attack the Dutch at Hela because Hollanders had supported the Danish King with ships, troops and commodities, despite an imperial mandate forbidding this and two warnings issued by Lubeck to refrain from such actions. Lubeck further justified its warlike behavior by pointing out that the truce between Holland and Lubeck had run out several years ago.<sup>56</sup> It carefully hid the fact that Maximilian already had the mandate withdrawn in February 1511.<sup>57</sup>

51 HR III, 6 no. 214, 255–256.

52 The report's statement of the convoy opened hostilities is contradicted in Mantels, 'Niedersächsische Lieder', verses 46–47 and by Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 137vo.-138.

53 HR III, 6 no. 227, 264. Compare Lahaine, 'Die Hanse und Holland', 246–247.

54 Bonnus, *Chronik*, fo. 19; Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 136vo.; also Mantels, 'Niedersächsische

Lieder', verse 42: *do spreken de van Lubech: Wi willent wagen/ der Hollander flat willen wir auch besoken/ und laten frimodich tho em andragen/ met unse geschudt wille wi se verjagenn/ under Hell, dar se bey ein poken.*

55 HR III, 6 no. 208, 252–254.

56 HR III, 6 no. 229, 266–267.

57 See above pp. 7–8.

The wordings of the report however fit within Lubeck's overall attitude to immediately deny responsibility for damaging Dutch, Danish and Danzig's possessions. The Lubeck council not only furnished itself with arguments that helped to minimize Dutch and imperial counter-measures like those issued after the seizures of Dutch ships in 1510.<sup>58</sup> It also defined the line of defense against Danzig's accusations that the fleet had illegally penetrated its territorial waters. Lubeck had thus violated the agreement with Danzig signed two months earlier on 26 June 1511 and the city council confirmed that Lubeck's privateers were not permitted to seize ships in Danzig's territorial waters. In turn Danzig promised neither to allow ships from Lubeck's enemies in its waters nor to facilitate transport of enemy goods or contraband on its ships.<sup>59</sup>

In a complaint sent on 23 August, Danzig used the argument that ships were seized '*up unsen stromen*' no less than five times.<sup>60</sup> The council emphasized that urban territorial waters included the waters along the Hela peninsula and the area east of this.<sup>61</sup> Assuming that the strip was some 21 km wide, a large convoy could easily dwell there.<sup>62</sup> Both parties therefore broke their agreement. Danzig allowed a Dutch convoy to seek shelter in its territorial waters, whilst Lubeck attacked the convoy in that same area. In further complaints, the Danzig council requested restitution of all cargo and vessels seized at Hela and appealed upon Lubeck to release the Dutch prisoners arrested on Danzig territory during the attack.<sup>63</sup> The Danzig council even vented fears that the Lubeck fleet might return in order to capture remaining commodities and arrest Dutch crew at Hela.<sup>64</sup>

Lubeck vehemently denied that it had violated Danzig's territorial waters, claiming that events enrolled themselves at open sea, well beyond the Danzig beacons. It went on to accuse Danzig's council of having supported its enemies as it had issued orders to the inhabitants of Hela to come to the aid of the Dutch. Lubeck turned a deaf ear to the council's argument that it had done so because Danzig property was at stake. It also justified the seizure of commodities in ships from Hamburg, arguing that it had been impossible to distinguish whether or not these were destined for the Dutch markets. Moreover, Lubeck argued that the Hollanders themselves added to the confusion by charging these ships with transporting their own merchandise.<sup>65</sup> Telling for the anti-

58 HR III, 6 no. 99, 73.

59 HR III, 6 no. 193, §§ 3-4, 164-165.

60 HR III, 6 no. 227, 264-265.

61 HR III, 6 no. 246, 274-275.

62 A. Ræstad, *Kongens strømme : historiske og folkeretslige undersøkelser angaaende sjøterritoret* (Kristiana 1912) 180-189. A Dutch maritime law from 1563 states that it is forbidden to practice hostility against both native and foreign ships within sight from land or port. 'Sight' was a fairly fixed concept in the Northern European area meaning a

distance of 21 km.

63 HR III, 6 no. 224-225, 261-264. Danzig also turned to Rostock, Stralsund and Wismar requesting to arrest warships from Lubeck visiting their harbors in order to realize restitution of commodities belonging to its citizens.

64 HR III, 6 no. 227, 263-264.

65 HR III, 6 no. 237, 269-270. Lübeck claimed the ships were '*in der wylden ze*'. Lahaine, 'Die Hanse und Holland', 248.

Dutch sentiments in Lubeck in these days was that in 1512 traders from the Hanse town of Kampen were depicted as hare-brained and Hollanders, being enemies, traitors and thieves that upheld illicit trading associations with Hollanders.<sup>66</sup>

Lubeck's council only gave way to diplomatic pressure related to the restitution of a seized copper cargo, commissioned by the Augsburg merchant Jacob Fugger and his brother in law Georg Thurso from Krakow.<sup>67</sup> The cargo was to be shipped through Danzig's harbour directly towards the Low Countries in order to circumvent Lubeck's staple rights. Danzig pointed out that the Fugger-Thurso company possessed royal certificates issued by the Polish King. With Thorso being closely linked to the Bohemian and Hungarian King Wladislaus and Fugger acting as one of emperor Maximilian's main creditors, the Lubeck council grudgingly replied to honor Danzig's request on that specific point only.<sup>68</sup> Danzig protests and efforts to stand up for its Dutch trading partners had, however, no success. It provoked Maximilian's intervention on behalf of Jacob Fugger in October 1511 and Lubeck's ultimate decision to compensate Fugger for his losses.<sup>69</sup> But despite their warlike tone, Danzig's complaints were shrugged off by the Lubeckian council.

#### THE BATTLE FOR THE PRIZE-SHIPS ON THURSDAY 14 AUGUST

The Danish fleet which should have protected the convoy, reached Rixhöft near Hela only two days later, where it initiated but lost a second battle with the Lubeckian fleet.<sup>70</sup> It is not entirely clear why the Danes did not arrive earlier, although the Dutch ships fleeing Hela had called for its help immediately. Some of the delay was caused by the interception of the three ships from Stralsund the Lubeck fleet had waited for at Rügen. With the Danes capturing only two of the ships, whilst the third one escaped, the fleet thus spent a day in battle instead of coming to the aid of the Dutch convoy immediately.<sup>71</sup> It does, however, not explain the entire delay which might have nurtured Dutch comments that the Danes were not inclined to deliver support.<sup>72</sup>

66 J. Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'The Close 'Other': Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Hollanders and the Hanse', *German History* 31/4, 468.

67 Dollinger, *Die Hanse*, 411; T.S. Jansma, 'Hanze, Fugger, Amsterdam' in: *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 91 (1976) 6-7.

68 The cargo measured 102 lasts of copper (ca. 200 tons) worth more than 9.000 Lubeckian mark. HR III, 6 no. 224, 261-262; no. 220, 259-260; no. 237, 269-270; Hauschild, 'Der Seekrieg', 369; Dollinger, *Die Hanse*, 411;

Jansma, 'Hanze, Fugger, Amsterdam', 10.

69 R. Ehrenburgh, *Das Zeitalter der Fugger. Geldkapital und Creditverkehr im 16. Jahrhundert* (Jena 1922<sup>2</sup>) 90-91.

70 Allen, *Rigers Historie*, 576; Arup, *Danmarks Historie*, 391, erroneously situates the battle at the coast of Mecklenborg.

71 Bonnus, *Chronik.*, fo. 19; Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 137.

72 Kock argues that the Danish fleet stayed at Bornholm, until the fleeing Dutch warships brought the message of what had happened at Hela. Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 137vo.;



Portrait of the poet and historian Theodorus Velius from Hoorn. Engraving by Theodor Matham, c. 1648. AMSTERDAM, RIJKSMUSEUM

Dutch sources clearly blamed the Danes for having contributed to the disaster at Hela. In his *Divisiechroniek* Aurelius confirmed that the four Dutch warships were indeed forced to flee Hela, but adds that if the Danes had been willing to fight, their combined forces could have caused the Lubeckians great damage, *mer die Denen en wilden niet (but the Danes would not)*.<sup>73</sup> Velius also adopted this view but added that the four warships were forced to flee as soon as they had left the Sound. The Dutch convoy was thereupon an easy prey for Lubeck that seized fifty of the biggest vessels without any resistance being delivered.<sup>74</sup> Like Aurelius and Gouthoeven, he primarily blamed the Danes whom he accused of lack of courage. But he also added that a Dutch proposal to recapture the lost ships was rejected by the Danes, forcing the Dutch to sail home with the remaining ships.<sup>75</sup> In later editions of his chronicle Velius

cf. Allen, *Rigers Historie*, 575–576.

<sup>73</sup> Aurelius, *Divisiechroniek*, fo. 430.

<sup>74</sup> Velius erroneously mentioned 1510 as the year in which the battles took place. Velius, *Chroniik* (1604), 91, (1617) 89, (1648) 99; Likewise Van den Bergh, ‘Correspondance de Marguerite d’Autrice avec ses amis, Tome I, 1506–1511’ in: L. Ph. C. Van den Bergh (ed.),

*Gedenkstukken tot opheldering der Nederlandse Geschiedenis II* (Leiden 1845) 255, note 1.

<sup>75</sup> Velius, *Chroniik* (1604) 91: ‘...princepalijk door onwillicheyt oft flauherticheyt...’ ‘...maer soo de Denen daer niet aen wilden, quamen sy met de rest van de vloote die niet ghenomen was wederom na huys’.

extended his anti-Danish views, arguing that the Danish warships already fled before they even gained proper sight of the enemy and through that caused discouragement and fear among the crew of the other vessels.<sup>76</sup> Since his chronicle holds no references to the battle at Rixhöft, which might have resulted into a release of the Dutch prizes, his anti-Danish sentiments seem to build upon a misleading representation of the events. The idea that the Danes lacked willingness to fight thus clearly took hold in nineteenth century Dutch historiography, as for example Berg and Ter Gouw concluded that support from the Danes, which had been counted upon, was absent.<sup>77</sup>

Although the outcome of the battle is clear, explanations for the reasons of the Danish defeat differ. Because the Lubeckian fleet was split up with seven or nine warships directing the Dutch prizes to the Trave harbor, only eleven or twelve vessels had to face a Danish majority.<sup>78</sup> Estimates of the size of the Danish fleet are not congruent but nonetheless emphasize its numerical superiority. Bonnus was probably most accurate in his statement that the Danish fleet enlarged with the two seized Stralsunder ships and the four Dutch warships counted about 22 vessels, which is quite less than the 27 or even 36 in other sources.<sup>79</sup> This implies that the Lubeck fleet was engaged in a battle against a combined Danish-Dutch squadron, an implicit but correct assumption that has been overlooked in literature.<sup>80</sup> Despite their clear majority and exchange of artillery fire from both sides, the fleet yielded under Lubeck's fire power and proved incapable of liberating the Dutch seized vessels or of causing serious damage to its adversaries.<sup>81</sup>

After Huitfeldt published his view on the course of the battle, it has been generally accepted that destruction of the rudder of the Danish flagship *Engelen* by enemy fire changed the odds.<sup>82</sup> As it lost much of its maneuvering capacity, it had to strike sail, which the other commanders interpreted as a sig-

76 Velius, *Chroniik* (1617) 89, (1648) 99. '... als de naulyer den Vyant saghen of vluchten en brachten daer deur oock d'ander Schepen in kleynmoedicheyt en vreesen...'. Van Gouthoeven, *D'oude chronijcke*, 572.

77 F.E. Berg, *De Nederlanden en het Hanze-verbond* (Utrecht 1833) 353; Ter Gouw, *Geschiedenis*, 348; Van den Bergh argues that Lubeck seized Dutch ships in spite of resistance offered by the Danish fleet. Van den Bergh, *Correspondance*, 255 note 1.

78 The Lower Saxon song mentions 18 ships; Kock estimates 19, with nine escorting the prizes and 10 in battle. Mantels, 'Niedersächsische Lieder', verse 61; Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 138vo. The Danziger Chronik talks about respectively seven and eleven; Beyer, 'Danziger Chronik', 461; Allen, *Rigers Historie*, 576, states that some Lubeckian ships protected the booty and others tried to uphold the pur-

suers; Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, 152, follow the Lower Saxon Song.

79 Bonnus, *Chronik*, fo. 19. The entry of around 220 ships in the manuscript is a scribal error. M. Hoffmann, *Geschichte der freien und Hansestadt Lübeck* (Lubeck 1892) 215: *by twe unde twintich starck*; compare Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 137and fo. 138vo.; Mantels, 'Niedersächsische Lieder', verse 58.

80 For example: Van Gouthoeven, *Chronijke*, 572 states that the Dutch warships returned home the day after Battle at Hela. Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, 177 only mentions a Danish squadron.

81 Compare Altmeyer, *Histoire des relations commerciales*, 43–44, who erroneously concluded that the Lubeckian admiral fled and only made it to the Trave harbor after he had released his Dutch prizes.

82 Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, 177–178.



Mural of the Danish flagship *Engelen* (presumed) in Voldby Church, Djursland (1510-25).

Photo: Kirsten Trampedach, 2010. COPENHAGEN, DANISH NATIONAL MUSEUM

nal to retreat. With the Danes backing off, Lubeck could call it a victory. Older sources do however not confirm Huitfeldts account. Grawert and Falke just reported in one single sentence that they had *groth eventur stan* (*endure great danger*), when the king's ships came together with the Dutch warships.<sup>83</sup> Bonnus limited himself to the remark that the Danes finally fled after a day-long fight.<sup>84</sup> The Lower Saxon song celebrated the severe damage the Lubeckian flagship *Marie* inflicted on the *Engelen* as it hit the front of the fighting platform.<sup>85</sup> Kock confirmed that artillery fire from the *Marie* was so damaging that blood flooded out of the drainage holes.<sup>86</sup> Even Beyer did not refer to a damaged rudder and like Bonnus he wanted it that the battle lasted the entire day until the King's ships were forced to retreat.<sup>87</sup> Henrik Smith mingled events at Bornholm and Hela but added that if commander Jens Holgersen Ulfstand had not lowered sail, the Danes might well have gained the upper hand. In any case, he did not mention the damaged rudder and its effects on the outcome of the battle.<sup>88</sup>

One can only guess why the Danish chronicle published 88 years after the events, suddenly introduces this twist of events. The purpose might have been

83 HR III, 6, no. 214, 257. Here, Grawert and Falke confirm that de squadron was composed of Danish and Dutch ships.

84 Bonnus, *Chronik*, fo.19.

85 Mantels, 'Niedersächsische Lieder', verse 62: *He schodt em in sin vorkastell ein fadt*

(*gadt*),/ *dar van wurden se van blade so nadt,/ aver bordt flogen hende und fote.*

86 Kock, *Chroniken*, fo.139.

87 Beyer, 'Danziger Chronik', 461.

88 Smith, 'En dansk Aarvog', 610.

to rehabilitate Jens Holgersen Ulfstand by suggesting that he had good reason to withdraw. Such a vision was probably inspired by Huitfeldt's claim that he found a letter at castle Glimminghus, signed by King Hans, thanking Ulfstand for his services and military performance.<sup>89</sup> It would scotch all rumors of an untimely flight and therefore soften the defeat. How this may have been, it did hardly disguise that a much smaller Lubeckian fleet buffed off its adversaries and sailed its Dutch prizes to the Trave harbor whilst the Danes retreated upon Gotland.<sup>90</sup> The Lubeck council nonetheless acknowledged that the *Engelen* superseded the city's naval force in fire power and immediately collected funds to build a larger flagship that was, however, never to see combat at sea.<sup>91</sup>

#### COMPOSITION AND LOSSES OF THE DUTCH FLEET

It is an accepted position in Dutch historiography that the ships heading for the Baltic in the spring of 1511 were sailing as one single convoy. Closer examination of Danish sources however seems to contradict this. According to Huitfeldt's observations, a Dutch convoy of two hundred ships had reached the Sound in spring 1511 and was placed under protection of a Danish fleet of twenty vessels.<sup>92</sup> Its commander Jens Holgersen Ulfstand thereupon allegedly received orders on <sup>1</sup> June 1511 to set sail on 6 June, an assumption contradicted by the fact that the very same day the Danish fleet was patrolling the seas at the port of Travemünde, after it had safely guided the Dutch merchant fleet into the eastern Baltic.<sup>93</sup> Apparently a first Dutch convoy already had left Helsingör before a second convoy, protected by the four recently constructed Dutch warships, had weighed anchor for departure from the Low Countries. At Hela, the Lubeckian warships thus ran into a large merchant fleet that had reached the Baltic in two separate convoys and was waiting to go home. To it may have come a limited number of ships that had spent winter in Danzig and also waited for protection.<sup>94</sup>

As at least thirty large ships were seized and many others destroyed, losses were enormous and estimated at an 120.000 guilders for Amsterdam and Hoorn only. Economic damage increased as Dutch shipping was brought to a virtual standstill, only to be resumed after a ten year's cease-fire with the Wends signed during a Diet in Bremen in September 1514.<sup>95</sup> Until that

89 Huitfeldt, *Danmarks Riges Krønike*, 282. The letter does not refer to the battle at Rixhöft but to Ulfstand's military services in general.

90 Kock, *Chroniken*, fo.139; Becker, *Umständliche Geschichte*, 495.

91 Fritze and Krause, *Seekriege*, 178.

92 Huitfeldt, *Danmarks Riges Krønike*, 280, stated that King Hans taking some Dutch vessels as was custom in order to rein-

force the Danish squadron; Confirmed by Waitz, 'Streitigkeiten', 168; Kock, *Chroniken*, fo. 131vo., erroneously mentions that the Dutch convoy counted eight warships.

93 See above p. 13.

94 See: Sicking, *Zeemacht en onmacht*, 110.

95 HR III, 6, no. 628, s. 603. Also Sicking, 'Die offensive Lösung', 46; Lahaine, 'Die Hanse and Holland' 250 assumes that already in 1512 Dutch shipping was resumed.

moment, prohibitions to resume shipping to the Baltic issued by the Dutch States-General in December 1511 and again in May 1512 were probably effective. Although a peace treaty signed in April 1512 between Denmark and Lubeck granted the Dutch free and protected access to the Sound, risks remained high since Lubeck sent war ships to the North Sea and asked other Wend cities to join in.<sup>96</sup> It forced Amsterdam, together with several West-Frisian harbors and villages, to invoke Danzig's help to secure the home voyage of Dutch ships that had spent winter there.<sup>97</sup>

It took almost a year for the Habsburg government and the Dutch cities to retaliate. Confiscations of Hanseatic ships visiting Dutch harbours followed in the course of 1512, whilst envoys from the emperor without success called upon the Wends to compensate the harm done only in September.<sup>98</sup> The matter was discussed again during peace negotiations at Bremen in 1514 but the talks did not reach an immediate conclusion and were postponed with another two years.<sup>99</sup> Some progress was only realized in April 1528 during a Diet in Cologne where the Habsburg envoys endorsed their claims with a list of 25 lost ships, of which 22 were seized at Hela. At least nineteen vessels were categorized as holks and fourteen ships had a volume between 100 and 200 lasts. With the average loss per ship estimated at 3.500 guilders resulting in to a total of 76.000 guilders, the list gives a rather fair impression of the damage inflicted by Lubeck in 1511.<sup>100</sup> Although much lower than the 120.000 guilders Amsterdam and Hoorn originally claimed, damages were still considerable. Negotiations were resumed during a Diet in Bremen in July 1530 but ended in a stalemate after the Wends insisted that the Dutch were to blame as they had disobeyed the imperial degree of 1509, whilst the Dutch saw no reason to downgrade their financial claims. Lubeck thereupon refused mediation by neutral umpires, causing gridlock after almost 20 years of fruitless negotiations.<sup>101</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Just like Velius unjustifiably labeled the Danes as scapegoats, distortions in Danish and Hanseatic chronicles were also at the root of diverging interpretations of the course and outcomes of the battles. With the Danish and Lubeck-

96 HR III, 6, no. 333, 338, no. 429, 402.

97 HR III, 6, no. 312, 325. Beyer, 'Danziger Chronik', 460, mentions that some Dutch ships were sold there at half their value.

98 Velius, *Chroniik* (1617) 89; (1648) 99; HR III, 6, no. 459, 420.

99 HR III, 6, no. 628, 603; Brand, 'Habsburg diplomacy', 134 concludes that the Wends lost the war at the negotiation table in Bremen.

100 D. Schäfer, F. Techen (eds.), *Hanserecess* III, 9 (Munich, Leipzig 1913) no. 362-363, 504-505; Lahaine, 'Die Hanse und Holland', 251 used the list to gain insight in the size of the damages.

101 HR III, 9, 794 ...zu *Beilegung der Irrungen zwischen dem Wendischen Städten und Holland, Seeland und Friesland und zu Abmachung der Schadenansprüche...*; no. 648a, 837-838; no. 650a, 838.

ian fleet being more or less balanced in size and striking force, the battle at Bornholm ended in a draw and initially had no consequences for the fragile balance of power between the two. Although others were blamed, the disaster at Hela was in the first place the consequence of failing Dutch naval policy, of which Dutch chronicles kept silence. It caused dependency on Denmark, which itself proved incapable of waging war against the Wends and offering sustained naval support to the Dutch at the same time. Delayed Danish action was caused by the interception of Stralsund's ships the day after Bornholm and not so much the result of unwillingness. Lubeck's attack at Hela showed all characteristics of deliberate and calculated action against Dutch merchant presence in the eastern Baltic. Careful fact picking served Lubeck's attempts to prevent escalation into a war with Danzig. It was also used to justify its intervention at Hela and to define its attitude vis-à-vis the Habsburg emperor. Whilst the Dutch chroniclers simply neglected the defeat of the combined Danish-Dutch forces at Rixhöft by a much smaller Lubeckian fleet, Danish historiography introduced the myth of a broken rudder in order to clean Ulfstand's sheet. Already a few decades after the battles, all parties involved presented different views on the events. Forgetting was as important as inserting exaggerations or inventing new truths, as it helped to blame the other and to justify its own actions and failures.

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